

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SEC-01
JUSE-00 TRSE-00 /057 W
-----082326Z 099943 /64
R 081852Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6378

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIR, PGOV, CS
SUBJECT: ALLEGED VESCO POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION

1. SUMMARY: FORMER PRESIDENT ECHANDI HAS PRODUCED DOCUMENTS ALLEGEDLY SHOWING THAT ROBERT VESCO GAVE 150,000 COLONES TO EX-MINISTERS IN FIGUERES ADMINISTRATION FOR THE GOVERNMENT PARTY (PLN). PLN TREASURER RODRIGUEZ HINTS MONEY MAY HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO ONE OF THE PARTY'S FACTIONS (I.E. FIGUERES) BUT DENIES THAT PARTY RECEIVED IT. ECHANDI'S CHARGE REPRESENTS THE FIRST OPPOSITION SALVO ON THE VESCO/ CORRUPTION ISSUE IN THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND RODRIGUEZ' RESPONSE GIVES FIRST INDICATION OF HOW PLN WILL ATTEMPT TO HANDLE IT. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMER PRESIDENT MARIO ECHANDI CHARGED IN A NATIONWIDE T.V. BROADCAST FEBRUARY 4 THAT IN MARCH 1976, ROBERT VESCO DONATED 150,000 COLONES (17,564 DOLLARS) THROUGH FORMER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (FIGUERES ADMINISTRATION) FERNANDO BATALLA TO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION PARTY (PLN). THIS MONEY WAS ALLEGEDLY PASSED BY BATALLA TO FORMER FIGUERES MINISTER OF FINANCE CLAUDIO ALPIZAR VARGAS. ECHANDI PRODUCED PHOTOSTATIC COPIES OF A CHECK FROM BATALLA TO ALPIZAR FOR 150,000 COLONES, ALPIZAR'S RE-
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CEIPT FOR THIS "CONTRIBUTION FROM FRIENDS," AND A MEMO TO ROBERT VESCO FROM BATALLA WHICH DECLARED "ATTACHED IS PHOTOCOPY OF CHECK SENT TO DON CLAUDIO ALPIZAR AND HIS RECEIPT FOR THE SAME" TO SUPPORT HIS ALLEGATIONS.

3. THE STORY WAS PICKED UP BY OPPOSITION DAILY LA

REPUBLICA, FEBRUARY 6 AND GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE. THE THREE DOCUMENTS CITED BY ECHANDI WERE REPRODUCED. SO FAR BATALLA AND AGHGZAR HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO THE CHARGES.

4. PLN TREASURER EUGENIO RODRIGUEZ VEGA DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF ANY DONATION FROM VESCO TO THE PARTY, BUT NOTED HE COULD NOT RESPOND FOR PERIOD PRIOR TO JUNE 1976, WHEN HE BECAME TREASURER. SIGNIFICANTLY, HE DID NOT REFUTE ECHANDI'S CHARGES. INSTEAD HE STATED THAT THIS COULD BE A PERSONAL MATTER AMONG THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED, OR POSSIBLY A CONTRIBUTION TO ONE OF THE "FACTIONS" WITHIN THE PLN. IMPLICATION IS CLEAR THAT IT WOULD BE FIGUERES'; ALPIZAR WAS TREASURER OF FIGUERES GROUP'S EFFORT A YEAR AGO TO FORM THEIR OWN PARTY TO PUSH FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM (TO PERMIT FIGUERES TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT AGAIN IN 1978).

5. SUBSEQUENT TO ECHANDI'S CHARGES, BOTH HERNAN GARRON AND GONZALO FACIO DENIED THAT THEIR CAMPAIGNS HAD RECEIVED VESCO MONEY. LUIS ALBERTO MONGE, CAMPAIGNING OUT OF TOWN, COULD NOT BE REACHED FOR COMMENT.

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6. COMMENT: ECHANDI'S REMARKS REPRESENT THE FIRST SALVO IN THE OPPOSITION'S CAMPAIGN TO MAKE VESCO-RELATED VES

PTION#A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. RODRIGUEZ' RESPONSE INDICATES THAT THE MONGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FORCES AND THE PLN INTEND TO TURN ASIDE SUCH CHARGES BY DISASSOCIATING FROM THOSE SO ACCUSED. IT IS EVEN MORE: BY LEAVING TWO LEADING FIGUERISTAS HOLDING THE BAG, THE GOVERNMENT PARTY IS POINTING STRAIGHT TO THE VESCO-FIGUERES CONNECTION TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE OPPOSITION'S CHARGES. THIS COULD BE DANGEROUS POLITICAL BUSINESS IN TERMS OF PLN UNITY, BUT HERE APPEARS TO BE NO OTHER WAY FOR THE PARTY TO HANDLE THE VESCO/CORRUPTION CHARGE AND MAINTAIN CREDIBILITY ON THIS ISSUE.
KILDAY

NOTE BY OCT: #TEXT AS RECEIVED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CORRUPTION, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ALLEGATIONS, FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SANJO00522
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770045-0483
Format: TEL
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770262/aaaaccxp.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e9524cca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3379587
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLEGED VESCO POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CS, (VESCO, ROBERT L)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e9524cca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009